

The Alexander Thomson Society Newsletter

Nº31, April 2002



**Somewhere in
this picture is a
design by
Thomson.**

Guess where?

(Answer on Page 7)

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and Wreay, and Cove

CASES

Egyptian Halls

We continue to be concerned over the apparent *impasse* over the restoration and reuse of what is surely one of the most remarkable commercial structures of the 19th century anywhere as well as one of Thomson's supreme masterpieces.

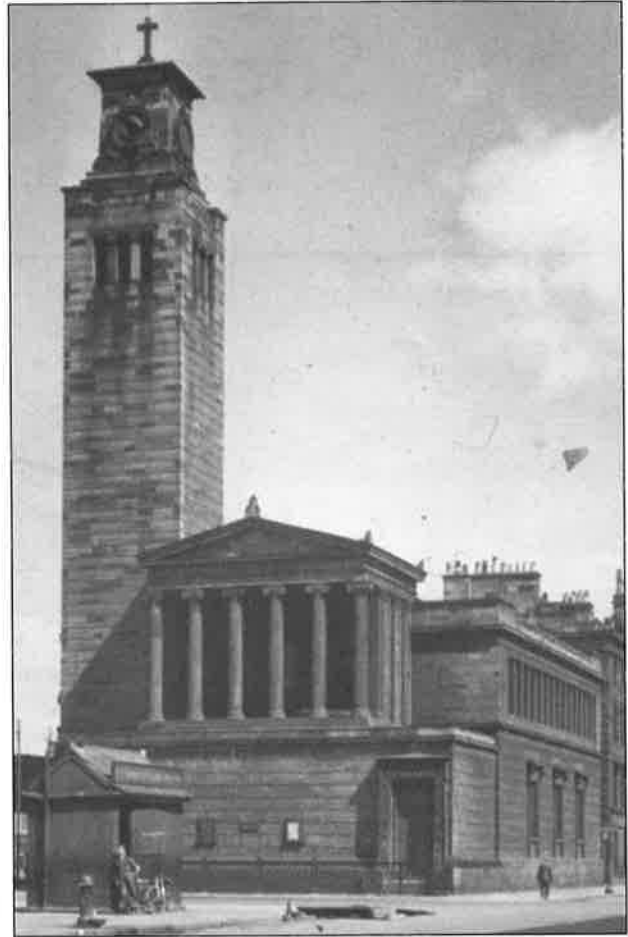
We have a developer who has already solved one major problem – that of ownership – who has employed good and responsible engineers and architects who have demonstrated that the structure is capable of restoration; we have the statutory body, Historic Scotland, now apparently only able to offer only a quarter of the grant aid it was prepared to give to a much more destructive scheme seven years ago – perhaps reflecting the fact that we now have a government in Scotland that would seem to care little for the historic fabric of this country; we have Scottish Enterprise (Glasgow) – formerly the wretched Glasgow Development Agency – which seems now to be indifferent to the economic fate of both Union Street and this particular development opportunity (although it was once prepared to assist the earlier restoration project to the tune of £245,000 if the various interested bodies consented to the potentially dangerous stone-cleaning of Thomson's façade); and we

have Glasgow District Council apparently willing to spend hundreds of thousands of pounds of public money on illuminating Victorian buildings in the city rather than on actually repairing them.

It is difficult, therefore, to know what to do next to get things moving, but we are glad to learn that Union Street Properties are approaching the Heritage Lottery Fund.

There is some progress, however, in that Mitchells Amusements of Falkirk have taken one of the ground-floor shops and its basement and “plans to spend £100,000 restoring the shopfront to Thomson's original design, and stripping out a false ceiling to reveal original features, including decorative corning and columns.”

An amusement arcade may not be quite the activity Thomson would have approved of, but it is not too far removed from the bazaar and exhibitions the Egyptian Halls once housed. Besides, anything which helps get this wonderful and extraordinary building back



into repair and use must be welcomed.

Caledonia Road Church

There is nothing to report about the Church (*seen above in 1950*) – no news about the realisation of the international ideas competition and other initiatives announced by the Crown Street Regeneration Trust back in that *annus mirabilis* 1999 – and that in itself seems a scandal.

The Sixty Steps

We are glad to hear that moves are afoot to restore Thomson's monumental staircase. The retaining wall has shown alarming signs of movement and this has spurred Glasgow

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The future of the Alexander Thomson Society

ANY organisation such as The Alexander Thomson Society needs to be thinking ahead as much as possible about its future direction and role. Here, Committee member and Membership Secretary Robert Stewart does just that...

THE SOCIETY has achieved much in its first ten years. Its stated aims of promoting Thomson and his work, protecting his remaining buildings and ensuring the best use of them for the future, have been vigorously pursued. Much of the success of this period has been due to the dedication and hard work of the Chairman, Dr Gavin Stamp and the Secretary, Dominic d'Angelo, with the assistance of numerous committee members. The culmination of this work was The Lighthouse exhibition in 1999 which brought Thomson and his buildings to the notice of the general public as never before. However membership of the Society peaked shortly after that and has been declining since. It seems therefore an appropriate time to look at the organisation of the Society to ensure its continuity, hopefully in a strengthened form.

Throughout its existence the Society has worked through the "one stop shop" system using 1 Moray Place for all communications. This has proved beneficial in many ways but it must be recognised that what was Thomson's home is a private house and so is subject to constraints of accessibility and possible change of

ownership. On the other hand Holmwood House, through the National Trust for Scotland, has been saved for the foreseeable future, and is now a public building dedicated to the promotion of Thomson. It provides accordingly a centre which all members can visit if they wish (albeit restricted at times), run by staff committed to the advancement of Thomson and his ideas. Would it not be better to "base" the Society in some way in Holmwood House? The Society address could be Holmwood for all regular administration and enquiries, unaffected by changes in personnel in the Society. There could be a Thomson library established there with a variety of archive material such as back numbers of the Newsletter and books, available to members and researchers. This could be beneficial to both the NTS and the Society, each promoting the other. Raising the profile of the Society with the volunteers at Holmwood could also be to our mutual gain in publicity and recruitment.

For most members the principal contact with the Society is the Newsletter, which has been produced very ably by Dominic d'Angelo over the

period. Committee members and others have contributed to this but the burden has fallen largely on Dominic. This seems the right time to set up a small subcommittee to provide more support, for example commissioning/ chasing up/ writing articles, researching pictures, working with the printer on preparation and production, and certainly on dispatching the final product to the members. It need not be composed of committee members, though there should be committee representation. There are no doubt those with a particular expertise or interest who would be willing to contribute in some way in this area, but who would not wish to involve themselves in the wider work of the main committee. There would exist then a group of members, with some knowledge and expertise, able to produce the Newsletter should any circumstance prevent the editor from doing it.

The Winter Lecture Series also needs the wider involvement of the membership. The preparation for this must take place well in advance, with the burden shared among a number of individuals, again not necessarily confined to the committee. The success of various lecture series, such as the West End lectures in Glasgow, shows there is a demand for and interest in things architectural. However

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such a programme does need forward planning and wide promotion for its success, and the Society must address how best to do this. Is there now an opportunity for the Society to go further in its work, for example hosting public meetings on the possible developments of buildings like the Egyptian Halls?

Visits have been an important part of the Society's work. They have taken many forms (walks, day trips and weekends), and have had both a social and an educational function. An attractive programme, open to members' friends as well as members, could generate membership, publicity and funds. Like the lecture series previous ventures appear to have relied on too few individuals, so the wider involvement of the membership is required once more. Forward planning and publicity are essential. A dedicated subcommittee could make a big difference.

Of the continued need for the Society there is no doubt. A strengthened Society with a larger and more involved membership could do much more. There are many things to be considered, not least of them being how to get young people involved (free Newsletters to schools? School lectures? Competitions?). The committee would appreciate the views of members on the

points raised. As few or as many words as you care to write (for the present to 1 Moray Place!) would be helpful. Other ideas and offers of assistance in particular areas will be carefully considered. It is worth consideration that a subcommittee might be composed of members who need never meet. Modern e-

mail communication gives links by which documents can be passed between individuals and groups, modified and returned very speedily. If anyone wishes to make their contribution to the general debate by this method they can do so by sending it to me at robert.stewart7@ntlworld.com.

Bob Stewart

MEMBERS OFFERS

MURRAY GRIGOR'S VIDEO 'Nineveh on the Clyde: The Architecture of Alexander 'Greek' Thomson' is available to Society members at a special price of £12, inclusive of P&P.

The 55-minute video includes additional footage not seen in its original television showing. The video is available in VHS (also NTSC format for US viewers).

'THE LIGHT OF TRUTH AND BEAUTY': Alexander Thomson's public lectures brought together in a single volume. They reveal him as a powerful and eloquent speaker, and confirm that not only was he one of the most original architects of his time, but also that his was one of the greatest minds in Scottish architecture.

Published at £9.95 paperback and £16.95 hardback, as a member of The Alexander Thomson Society, you can save almost 50% on the retail cost of the book.

Paperback: ~~£9.95~~ £6.00

Hardback: ~~£16.95~~ £11.00

The members' price includes P&P.

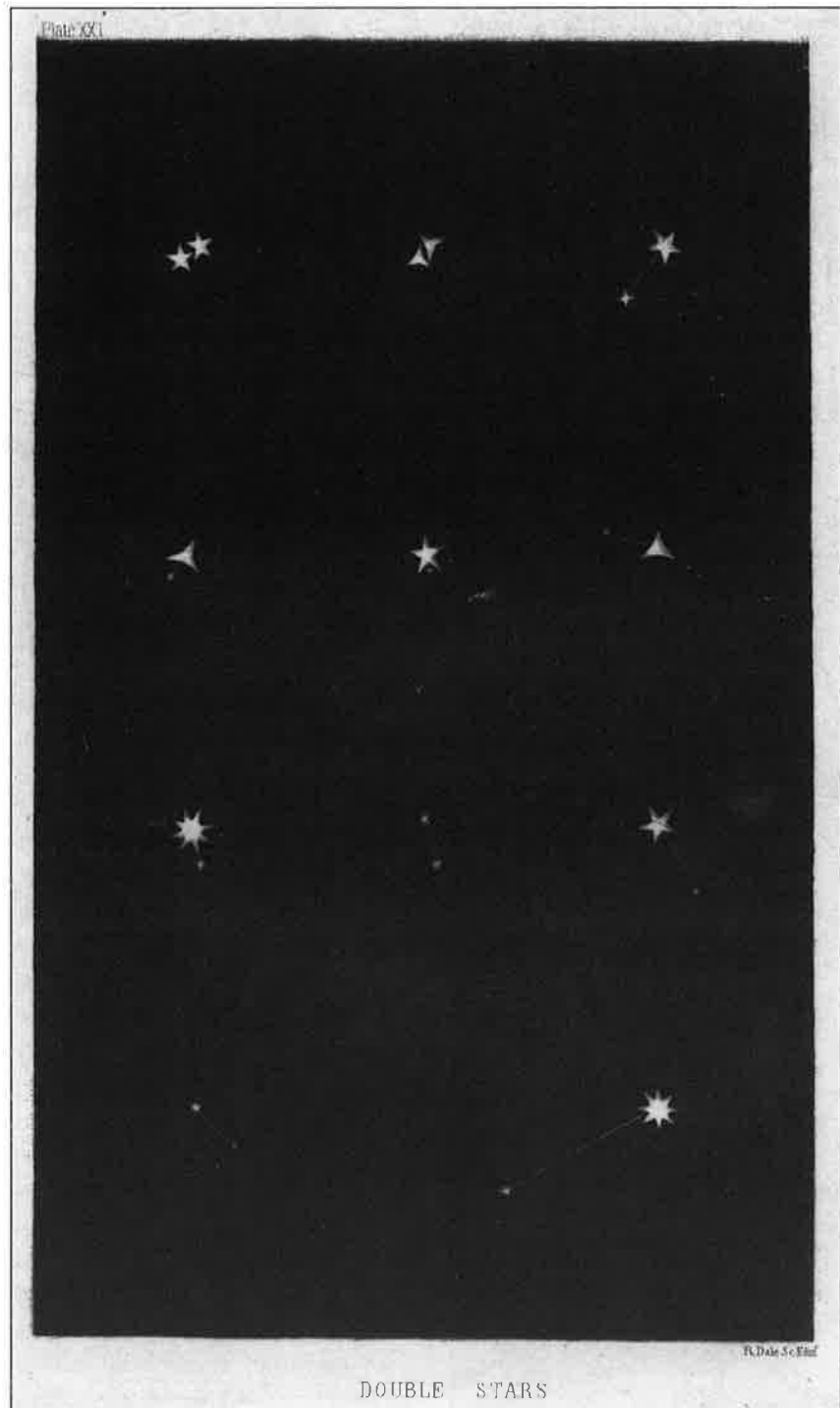
Simply send your name and address with a cheque payable to 'The Alexander Thomson Society', and post it to 'Video Offer' or 'Light of Truth Offer', The Alexander Thomson Society, 1 Moray Place, Strathbungo, Glasgow G41 2AQ.

Heavenly Architecture

The *Architecture of the Heavens* was the title of a book by J.P. Nichol, Professor of Astronomy in the University of Glasgow, first published in 1838. I recently acquired the ninth edition, of 1851, which is illustrated with wonderfully black steel engravings depicting the shapes of nebulae and constellations. Although much of the text is abstruse and concerned with mathematical formulae, building on the discoveries of Sir John Herschel and others, it was evidently a popular book and therefore might be illuminating about Thomson's thinking – informing not only the way he would cover the plaster ceilings of his drawing rooms with a pattern of gilded stars but that remarkable passage in the third Haldane Lecture in which he told his audience how

“Philosophers, in explaining the nature of light and endeavouring to give us some idea of the rate at which it travels, tell us that some stars are so distant that, although they may have been created thousands of years ago, their light may not yet have reached us...”

Thomson, we know, was widely read and aware of developments in scientific thinking; nevertheless, I do not suggest that there is necessarily a direct connection between *The Architecture of the Heavens* and Thomson's predilection for stars. After all, as W.R. Lethaby later explored in *Architecture, Mysticism and Myth*, representing the heavens on



vaults and ceilings is a very ancient tradition in sacred architecture. It is rather that both are reflections of that questioning intellectual culture

which then flourished in Scotland: a culture which could accept momentous discoveries while being rooted in the divine
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2002 Society visits

THE SOCIETY'S Committee recognises that visits to sites associated with Thomson are an important part of what we should be doing.

This year, we start with a day trip by coach to Carlisle and Wreay.

Carlisle and Wreay, Sat, 11th May

Our coach leaves North Hanover Street, adjacent to Glasgow's Queen Street station, at 8.30am (we'll hold it in the event of the 7.30 train from Edinburgh being delayed).

In Carlisle, we're planning a two-hour visit of Citadel Station, the Cathedral, the Citadel, and the grave of Alexander Thomson's grandfather-in-law, the architect Peter Nicholson.

In the 12th century, Henry I allowed the founding of a religious establishment, later making the town a diocese, and thus the Priory into a Cathedral (*below*). The Prior's Tower next to the Cathedral houses a small exhibition in the pele tower.



Carlisle Castle (*above, right*) is a medieval fortress that has watched over the City for over nine centuries. The Castle is



also home to the Border Regiment Museum.

Carlisle became a great 19th century railway city, with seven independent railway companies sharing the use of Carlisle Citadel Station, built in 1847 by Sir William Tite.

The original southern entrance to the City, Bothergate, was replaced in the 16th Century, and then again in the 19th Century, with two new towers known as the Citadel. This was designed by Thomas Telford and Sir Robert Smirke as assize courts and a prison (with Peter Nicholson managing the courts project). The West Tower is now open to the public.

After lunch, we travel to the village of Wreay, some five miles south of the city. Gavin Stamp writes:

"Here is one of the most extraordinary buildings in Britain, St Mary's parish church, consecrated in 1842, remarkable in its own right and also as the work of a highly intelligent and enterprising woman, Sara Losh. She also designed the adjacent mausoleum, the school, the schoolmaster's house and the mortuary chapel in the village.

"The church was designed in a sort of Romanesque round-arched style – and so may be loosely compared with Thomson's Craig Ailey of a

decade later – but Miss Losh's interpretation of the style was quite as original as Thomson's was of his. The interior furnishings are wildly eccentric and, as Nikolaus Pevsner observed, "one might easily make the mistake of dating St Mary as one of the examples of the Early Christian or Byzantine revival which took place around 1900 and its carvings as Arts and Crafts."

We aim to be back in Glasgow mid-evening. The coach journey costs £15 return, and those intending to travel should turn up and pay on the coach. Why not bring a friend: they don't have to be members (but we could always sign them up).

Architecture Week, 21st-30th June

Architecture Week 2002 in Glasgow includes a number of events at The Lighthouse and at Holmwood. For Holmwood details, call 0141 637 2129 for further details.

Cove / Kilcreggan, Sat, 27th July

A day trip by train down the coast to visit Thomson buildings: walking shoes and packed lunches are suggested.

Buy a one-day Scratchcard and gather on the Lower Level platform at Glasgow Queen Street for the 0859 to Helensburgh, via Partick (0905), Clydebank (0918) and Dumbarton Central (0930), plus intermediate stops.

Thomson's National Bank office

THE GROWTH of the Scottish banking system was a necessary part of Glasgow's rise as an industrial and mercantile centre. Indeed, Glasgow's fortunes themselves were often enmeshed with the fortunes of the city's various banks.

The collapse in 1857 of the Western Bank would doubtless have affected Thomson's client-list, though we have no direct evidence for its effect on his business (though it may have spurred his involvement in future buildings as architect-developer).

The National Bank of Scotland, founded in 1825, was one of the most active during Thomson's lifetime; acquiring banks in Aberdeen, Perth and Glasgow, in 1864 it was the first Scottish bank to open a London branch (Its capital purchased by Lloyd's Bank in 1918, it continued to trade separately until 1958 when it merged with the Commercial Bank as the National Commercial Bank of Scotland, later merged with the Royal Bank of Scotland in 1969).

Given Thomson's life-span and predilection for the Greek, and the Classical style that typifies banking buildings of the period, it does seem slightly odd that only one design task for a bank, as far as we're aware, ever came his way. That was the design for a new shop front and interior for the National Bank of Scotland, at 8-10 Union Street in 1870,



which appears in Gavin Stamp's list of works in *Alexander Thomson: The Unknown Genius*. This notes that *Building News* records a "branch office of the National, Union Street, by Messrs A. & G. Thomson", and a petition submitted in May 1870 to the Dean of Guild Court to extend the Bank premises at No.8 Union Street into the shop at No.10.

The bank occupied the ground floor of an earlier 19th century building, at that time occupied by the Argyle Hotel; the detail from a Mitchell Library photograph (above), taken in 1924, shows the restrained bank frontage to the left of the group of shops. How restrained the exterior design was can be seen in the detail (right), from an October 1923

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District Council into action in conjunction with local residents. In an ideal world, of course, the splendid and unusual anthropomorphic cast-iron lamps on the staircase – identical to those which once were attached to the front of the Queen's Park Church – would be restored, but, unfortunately, no examples are extant to copy.

Photographs

Phil Sayer, who took all the superb new photographs used in the 1999 Alexander Thomson: The Unknown Genius exhibition, has offered his colour transparencies to the society. We have accepted his most generous offer and, both for safe keeping and to make these important images widely available, we have suggested

that we lodge them with the National Monuments Record for Scotland in Edinburgh.

The Society's Address

Your committee has been considering the proposal that its address should become Holmwood House, Netherlee Road, Cathcart. Sally White, the National Trust for Scotland's manager at the house, has generously accepted the idea, which must surely benefit both the society and the wider appreciation of Thomson and his architecture. No.1 Moray Place is, of course, the house in the terrace – “finest of all Grecian terraces” – designed by Thomson and, in the event, occupied by him, but it became the society's would-be ‘headquarters’ owing to circumstances rather than

design. It is, of necessity, a private house, whereas Holmwood House is not only Thomson's finest villa and a building of international significance, but an architectural monument in the public realm and open to the public. If the Alexander Thomson Society were based at Holmwood, it would surely both benefit the society and encourage greater awareness of Thomson's achievement there.

Meanwhile Sally White is hoping to devote one of the former first-floor bedrooms at Holmwood to building up a Thomson collection and archive. At present, the shelves are rather empty, so if any members have any books or other objects they would like to donate to this worthy cause, she would be pleased to hear from them.

Thomson's bank job

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photograph in the Mitchell, of Shaw, Walker & Co.'s frontage at 14-22 Union Street, where the camera just catches the first quarter of Thomson's work, together with some youthful on-lookers.

No plans survive of this relatively small job, although something may exist in the archives of the Royal Bank of Scotland. The building itself disappeared around 1929, when the site was redeveloped for the Adelphi Hotel (*left*), and itself redeveloped twice over since then for Boots.

That plain exterior raises another question: were there other exteriors for banks whose existence we're not aware of, simply because they were so simple and uncharacteristic of Thomson's more distinctive style?

Egyptian lamps and paving stones, Part I



WHEN Alexander Thomson created the Egyptian Halls (1870-72), he also designed six lamp standards to appear outside it (five can be seen in the Annan photo of 1874 above). This was not just a question of completing the aesthetic: the ground on which the standards appeared formed part of the curtailage of the building. It was therefore perfectly reasonable for him to do so, just as he designed lamp standards to stand at the front of the gardens on Moray Place

(since removed), and to illuminate the façade of Queen's Park Church.

In these latter cases, however, the lamps could be 'read' as physically linked to the buildings in front of which they stood; this is not the case with Egyptian Halls. Today, for example, we tend to see buildings as stopping at the front door, notwithstanding architects' frequent – if often inappropriate – use of paving to extend the 'apparent' ground of office blocks. And that's in part

the result of a sustained programme of reclamation of pavements by local councils, of which more in Part II.

Reaction to Thomson's building and its lamp standards came almost as soon as they went up, as the *Glasgow Herald* reported on 5th November, 1872. At a meeting of the Police Board,

"Mr William Miller [one of three Councillors for the Ninth Ward] called the attention of the Board to the six ornamental lamps erected in Union Street, and asked if the committee had



Above: George Washington Wilson's photograph of the Ca D'Oro shows the lamp standards still in place.

seen the plans and whether they had sanctioned them. He considered that they were an obstruction to the pavement. Mr Osborne [Cllr Alexander Osborne] said the lamps had been sanctioned when Mr Neill was chairman, and that he had made enquiry for the sketch of the lamps, but it had not been found. He would, however, see what authority the Board had over lamps after they had sanctioned their erection. The subject then dropped."

Two days later, Cllr J Steel wrote extensively in *The Herald* on the state of Glasgow's streets and pavements, upbraiding his colleagues for a lackadaisical attitude to the conditions for carters and pedestrians alike. The second half of his letter focused on lamp-posts:

"I have talked with both Mr Carrick and with Mr Whyte against the continuance of the practice of placing the lamp-post on the extreme verge of the footpath, where it is constantly

in danger of being knocked down, and which, with the kerbstone arrangement of the day, the ordinary 'dish' of a cartwheel causes it to strike. Bailies who drive so much about in cabs – at the public expense – must have often seen cab doors, too, knocked off, from the absurd setting of these posts....

"I don't like to play spy or informer – I am not good enough for that yet – but since the fat pillars in Union Street have been talked of in committee, I might add that they are disgraceful-looking things, and in a crowded thoroughfare like Union Street will get many a bump, and be another cause of tribulation to the poor carters; for although strong enough to repel the cart, still the lamps get broken by the jolt when it comes; and then the grand march with a posse of policemen, and the poor carter like a felon on a hurdle going to be hanged, and the pledge, and the next day with Bailiedom and Assessordom up and doing."

On 11th November, 'F.O.E.' responded:

"Sir, it was with feelings of astonishment and regret I read that part of your report of the meeting of the Police Board held on Monday last, and the item by Mr Steel in the latter part of his letter to you on the Police Committee published to-day, referring to the new lamps on Union Street. I can assure you, Sir, that it never for a moment entered into my mind – nor, I am certain, into the mind of any other person with a feeling for the fine arts – that these splendid lamps should be looked upon as an obstruction to the pavement. When we look at the building before which they are placed, the architect and the maker, there is little wonder I am astonished at the remarks above referred to.

"I really cannot see how these fine lamps can be looked upon as anything but an ornament to the street in which they are placed, and a credit to the city. If objections such as these are to be entertained, it were high time cultivation of the fine-arts in Glasgow should betake themselves to some other city where their abilities will be appreciated.

"I have spoken to many persons – and good judges of such works – about these lamps since they were erected, and I have not heard a word of obstruction mentioned until I saw it in your paper – instead, it was quite the opposite. They are looked upon, as far as I can learn, as among the finest – if not the finest – examples of the Grecian school in the city, and I am really inclined to think that Messrs Miller or Steel have not been looking at them from a finer point of view when they condemned them – the one as an

obstruction, and the other as disgraceful looking things.'

Back came Cllr Steel in a long letter on 13th November, followed by a letter signed 'B' on the 16th:

"Sir, I cannot always agree with Councillor Steel's view of men or things, but I certainly did agree with his strictures on the Union Street monstrosities. "F.O.E." complains that Councillor Steel does not look at them from the proper point of view; but I have gazed at them from every point of the compass, and have failed as yet to discover any beauty or fitness in them. I would therefore suggest that "F.O.E." should put a chalk mark at his "proper point" and, while at it, he might also hang up a board stating that they are "pure Greek ornaments", as common mortals will fail to discover this for themselves. My first impression when I saw them was that they were casings to protect the lamp-posts while the paint was wet. I could not conceive of such things as being intended for permanent structures, as they are neither useful nor ornamental; and I sincerely trust, for the sake of the city, that Councillor Steel will succeed in getting them removed.

"It is almost a pity that "F.O.E." should have been in such a hurry to air his opinions as to the laws of harmony and fitness in design, without first taking the trouble to get a little information on the subject. After his dogmatic statement that they are the finest examples of Greek art in the city, he will be surprised to learn that they are not Greek art at all, but Egyptian, if anything; and were

they Greek, they would be quite out of place standing in front of a building modelled in the style of an Egyptian temple – only the Egyptians, like wise men, placed their temples on the ground, where they could be got at, while their modern imitations – more heavenly-minded, perhaps, make attics of them, by putting the principal floors up three or four storeys.

"I think it is fairly open to discussion whether there can be any fitness or harmony between and Egyptian temple and cast-iron lamp-posts. It looks to me like a decided case of riding a hobby to death, and although I yield to no one in my admiration for the grand monuments of classical architecture, I think it a great pity that our architects cannot break themselves from the trammels, and, instead of aiming at being mere stylists, try and strike out for something original for themselves. They seem to miss the grand secret of harmony – that is, the "fitness" of their designs. Now-a-days, if a person wishes to erect an iron foundry, church, or public-house, and goes to an architect, it will be after the model of an Egyptian or Greek temple, Roman amphitheatre, or Gothic cathedral, according to what happens to be the hobby of the particular architect."

The next day came a more practical defence, when 'Tillieludlem' wrote:

"Sir, – After reading the amusingly vigorous letter of Councillor Steel on lamp posts and perpendicular Sphinxes, I went with a friend, who held one end of the tape-line, and took measurements. The line of frontage is about 118 feet,

which multiplied by 7 feet – the extent to which the proprietor of the new building could have carried out his area railings – gives 826 square feet of pavement accommodation gained by the public, under deduction, of course, of the base area of the six lamp posts which have so alarmed the uninitiated in art and architecture. Each base being 27 1/3 inches diameter of circle, gives, multiplied by 6, as near as may be, 25 1/3 square feet; clear public gain of foot pavement, fully 800 square feet, besides the light of the six gas lamps at no charge to the public. If there be anything heinous in bulky lamp posts, there are many in Glasgow, up for years, each occupying quite as much of the pavement.

"Having had five minutes to spare before catching my train, and having the tape line handy, I had the curiosity to measure the base of lamp posts at Bridge Street station, and found them to be 105 inches circumference, or fully 33 1/3 inches diameter against 27 1/3 inches for those on Union Street. Has any ex-Bailie declared the Railway Company's lamp posts "not the cheese" for such a crowded thoroughfare? Artistically, Mr Steel's letter is the cleverest bit of nonsense which has appeared on the subject. With his blunt characteristic honesty he admits his ignorance of architecture. Why are the other dissatisfied Councillor critics not equally candid? They might have taken a leaf out of the book of the nigger, who began his sermon with the admission, "I am an uneducated man, thank God for it!"

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Heavenly Architecture

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revelation afforded by the Presbyterian religion.

The astronomer and the architect were both concerned with finding absolutes, with eternal LAWS which governed both the motion of the planets and the ideal forms of masonry buildings. In concluding his study of stars that were, as he well knew, an inconceivably vast distances – light-years – away from the Earth, Nichol concluded

“And if all that we see, if from Earth to sun, and from sun to universal star-work – that wherein we best behold images of Eternity, Immortality and God; if that is only a state or phase of a course of being, rolling onward evermore; what must be the Creator, the Preserver, the Guide of all; He at whose bidding these phantasms came from nothingness, and shall again disappear; whose name amid all things, alone is EXISTENCE – I AM IN THAT I AM!”

There is something here of that almost mystical quality evident in Thomson’s approach to design – so well expressed by that star-studded ceiling at Holmwood, a domesticated representation of the Infinite.

Next Newsletter

The next *Newsletter* will appear in September 2002.

Two editions of the *Newsletter* now appear annually, in April and September, with separate mailings as needed to notify members of events and meetings.

More Praise

IN PREVIOUS publications we have charted early notices of Thomson’s achievement outside Glasgow.

Another admirer would seem to have been the Revd W.J. Loftie – a voluble critic of Sir Gilbert Scott’s restorations – who, in his book of 1893 entitled *Inigo Jones and Wren, or, The Rise and Decline of Modern Architecture in England* (London, Rivington, Percival & Co.), observed that (p.254)

“One of the most original and brilliant professors of the Grecian style was Thomson, of Glasgow, but very few of his works are extant.”

Furthermore, he considered (p.261),

“‘Athenian’ Stuart, as he was called, must be regarded as the originator of a taste for Grecian architecture. He did not succeed with it himself, nor did the taste for it last. The picturesqueness of which Thomson of Glasgow has shown it was capable was wholly missed, and some designs of Hardwick, for the railway station at Euston Square, are almost the only good work of the kind which was produced in London.”

Loftie’s book was not so much a study of the architecture of Jones and Wren as a polemic in defence of Classicism, so that he could cheerfully illustrate Thomson’s Caledonia Road Church and assert that (p.267)



“St. Pancras shows us how [a tower] cannot be managed and where it should not be placed.”

“A church at Glasgow, by the late ‘Grecian’ Thomson, shows how such a feature as a tower can be managed in this style, and also where it should be placed. St. Pancras shows us how it cannot be managed and where it should not be placed.”

And, finally (p.268-272),

“The fact is, we had the style and we had the demand, but, and this is after all the important thing, we had not an artist to answer to the call. True, as I have already remarked, an architect in Grecian of great power, named Thomson, showed in some admirably-proportioned designs what might have been done, but very few of his learned and delicate designs were carried out before his death, some five-and-twenty years ago. He seems to have cared less for symmetry than for proportion, and was particularly noted for his management of blank walls.”

The Newsletter

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The Alexander Thomson Society Newsletter is published by The Alexander Thomson Society, 1 Moray Place, Strathbungo, Glasgow G41 2AQ, to whom all enquiries and correspondence should be addressed.

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